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ABSTRACT

Evaluations of school restructuring, particularly school-based management (SBM) and shared decision making (SDM), have tended to focus on problems of implementation and on its consequent failure to fulfill its promises. Inadequate resources, unclear responsibilities, inhibiting regulations, and institutional resistance have all been cited as reasons for failure. Some argue that even so holistic a concept as "school restructuring" cannot hope to succeed without an even more embracing approach: systemic reform. In early 1990, New York City Public Schools came under new leadership and efforts were made to implement SBM and SDM. A systemic reform effort was attempted by the Board of Education, International Business Machines (IBM), and several foundations. A study of this effort found that by traditional measures, the reform effort had little success. However, SDM at the six schools studied did gather human resources for change even when faced with little time, no authority, and insufficient resources. SDM teams also helped focus school issues and problems. However, small and large political problems within teams and between teams and the Board of Education did hinder restructuring. Structures and resources necessary to accomplish restructuring goals were not present in most schools and there was little evidence of a transformation. (Contains 22 references.) (JPT)

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"Necessary but Insufficient: Three, Linked Efforts to Restructure NYC Public Schools in 1990-1991"

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National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST), Box 110, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1993.[1]

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Introduction

Attempts to evaluate school restructuring, and particularly school-based management and shared decision making (SBM/SDM), the form of governance with which it has become identified, have tended to focus on varied problems of implementation, and on its consequent failure to fulfill its promise (David, 1989; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990a; Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990b; Malen & Ogawa, 1992; Levine & Eubanks, 1992). Resources inadequate to the task, unclear delegation of responsibilities, layers of inhibiting regulation, institutional resistance to full implementation -- these have been the chief identified characteristics of SBM/SDM. Seemingly in response, some commentators now argue that even so holistic a concept as "school restructuring" cannot have hopes of success unless it takes place within an even more embracing approach: systemic reform (Smith & O'Day, 1990; Fullan & Miles, 1992).

The initiative examined in this paper was such a systemic effort, a coordinated attempt by the Board of Education, a corporate volunteer (IBM), and a number of foundations (represented by the Fund for New York City Public Education) to alter both the structure and the culture of school management in the city through three, linked interventions, collectively known as the IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement. It, too, ran into a number of difficulties, some of which were perhaps inevitable. The paper summarizes the problems and successes of the project's various aspects from within a "conception of implementation as bargaining and transformation..." (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 175), attempts to develop an empirically based understanding of the minimum resources needed to achieve positive effects, and offers some points for discussion.

Development of the Project

In early 1990, the New York City Public Schools came under the leadership of a new Chancellor, Joseph Fernandez. Carrying the aura of the co-creator (with Pat Tornillo, head of the United Teachers of Dade, AFT) of the school-based management and shared decision making structure in Dade County, Florida, Dr. Fernandez moved quickly to begin SBM/SDM in New York City.

Experimental involvement by the New York City public schools in such restructuring had actually begun well before 1990, through a number of initiatives that gave teachers a greater voice in school-level affairs and offered schools the opportunity to develop their own special programs: the Comprehensive Schools Improvement Project (CSIP), the 1988 School-Based Options clause of the contract between the teachers union and the Board of Education, and the Corridor Initiative of 1989. Chancellor Fernandez' 1990 SBM/SDM proposal differed from these earlier efforts in a number of interesting ways. First, while it was a system-wide initiative rather than an experiment involving only a very few schools, it gave no formal role to the Community School Districts who most directly oversee elementary and junior high education in New York City. Second, after

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[1] Portions of this paper appeared in "Shared decision making teams and school restructuring in NYC: Problems of management and leadership." Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco (1992). Both are drawn from the author's "IBM/SDM/NYC: Efforts to Restructure NYC Public Schools Through Shared Decision Making and Training in Strategic Planning, 1990-1991," an NCREST document.

setting up a mechanism for the SBM/SDM teams' creation and support (planning funds up to about $20,000, and the part-time services of a trained facilitator), the Chancellor gave literally no direction to the teams as to their purview, stating simply that "the team established as a result of this initiative becomes the overall management team of the school" (New York City Public Schools Office of the Chancellor, 1990).

Most significantly, and quite unlike the arrangement in Dade, this initiative involved no delegation of powers to the new SDM teams being created. Under the provisions of the School Based Options Clause of 1988, each NYC *school,* with or without an SBM/SDM team, already had the right to develop alternative structures -- changes in "how time is to be used, how classes are to be arranged, and how coverages are to be paid" (Task Force on Professionalism, 1988, p. 43), provided that the proposed change received the prior support of 75% of the voting staff in the school. The new SBM/SDM initiative gave each *team* no authority beyond that already afforded the staff as a whole. The Chancellor's initiative thus created a new structure (the team) for shared decision making within schools, but no mechanism for school based management by the team. Although given the broadest possible canvas on which to work, the teams lacked the authority to implement their decisions. The "overall management team of the school" had been apportioned voice without authority, hardly a secure foundation. Nevertheless, by October, 1990 128 schools had gone through the necessary registration and staff approval process and had joined the SBM/SDM initiative.

Almost as soon as he arrived, IBM invited the Chancellor and his deputies to IBM's Executive Training Center for a two-day strategic planning training process facilitated by IBM trainers. This led to an invitation from the Chancellor for IBM's further involvement, and after some further discussions an offer was made and accepted to offer training in strategic planning to 25 shared decision-making teams (some organized under Corridor, some newly formed under SBM/SDM). Each team would attend a day-and-one-half training session led by a volunteering IBM manager, and have his or her occasional services as a facilitator over the course of the 1990-1991 school year.

The Fund for New York City Public Education (the Fund) was likewise quickly involved with the Chancellor's SBM/SDM initiative. Its efforts had already widely influenced school practice -- it was in charge of implementation of the previous Chancellor's Corridor Initiative, for example -- and it was given similar charge of implementing and overseeing the collaboration between IBM and the schools. Subsequently (in April, 1990), the Fund linked the IBM/SDM plan to one of its other projects focused on promoting increased collaboration and coordination between schools and their neighborhood community-based organizations (CBOs), naming the amalgam the IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement. The purpose of the project was to further restructuring efforts through three, linked efforts: (1) supporting and encouraging school based management and shared decision making as practiced by teams created under Corridor and SBM/SDM; (2) teaching strategic planning as it is practiced at IBM to the SDM team at each participating school and facilitating the teams' school-based management practice over the course of a year; and (3) promoting the involvement of community based service organizations (CBOs) in that training and management process; all in quest of providing better services to children.[2]

Study Design

In 1990-1991 the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST) was invited by the Fund to act as evaluator of the IBM/Fund Project, and it was

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3 Further details about the genesis of the IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement can be found in the appendix to "IBM/SDM/NYC: Efforts to Restructure NYC Public Schools Through Shared Decision Making and Training in Strategic Planning, 1990-1991."

decided to use year-long case studies of six of the 25 schools involved as the chief mechanism of that evaluation. Data collection for the six case studies was accomplished chiefly through interview and observation. Each school's strategic-planning training sessions were observed in their entirety; each site was visited at least six times over the fall, winter, and spring of the 1990-1991 academic year; and a representative sample of project participants was interviewed, generally more than once. Typically, these included the principal, the UFT chapter leader, the SDM team chairperson, the IBM facilitator, one or more CBO representatives, several team members, and several school people not on the SDM team. In some cases every team meeting was observed; in some schools the observer was present at least one day every week; and in some cases team members kept a journal with the researcher or engaged in frequent telephone debriefings. Finally, surveys were conducted of all participants at the initial strategic planning retreats, of all SDM team members at mid-year, and of all IBM facilitators and each SDM team at the end of the year; and material from these surveys was collated with the other findings.

Three questions guided the research: (1) was New York City's version of SBM/SDM an effective engine of school restructuring; (2) was teaching strategic planning to the SDM teams and facilitating their decision making a fruitful direction for corporate aid; (3) did involving CBO representatives in these activities lead to increased services to children and more efficient coordination between schools and CBOs.

The Schools

The six schools selected for documentation were chosen on the basis of their self-descriptions submitted in applying to the IBM/Fund Project. Our wish was to choose schools that had differing levels of prior involvement with shared decision making and with CBO collaboration, while paying some attention to representing a range of school levels and geographic areas within New York City. Two were chosen because they were elementary schools who appeared to have had little experience with either CBO collaboration or shared decision making, while a third elementary school in a different borough had considerable SDM history. A junior high that had a significant and successful experience with CBO collaboration and that welcomed observation was also selected. A high school (no prior SDM experience and little CBO involvement) and an alternative school founded on significant staff involvement in decision making and describing itself as reliant on CBOs for a major part of its educational program rounded out the diverse group.

Armstrong Elementary, Queens -- Armstrong Elementary is a neighborhood school in a neighborhood undergoing rapid change as a steadily expanding, relatively uneducated and poor immigrant population crowds into spaces that for some years have been the stable preserve of Irish and Italian working class people, themselves the grown and prospering children of earlier immigrations. The school's student population has grown by over a third in only three years, and the poverty of the new community has changed the school's status to Chapter 1. The greatly increased numbers of students, and particularly the many additional teaching specialists associated with Chapter 1, made for huge problems with space allocation; unused to the hard practices of management wherein every decision causes aggravation to one party or another, the team's time was consumed by this management problem during the first quarter of the school year.

Moreover, the principal and chapter leader did not choose to direct or "boss" the team. Educated about and committed to the ideal of shared decision making, they both acted as visionary leaders who spoke forcefully in discussion but allowed the team to manage its own affairs. Historically, the team had done so admirably, though not without considerable conflict, in the capable hands of strong, process-oriented facilitators trained by the Teacher Centers Consortium of the UFT. Under that leadership, the team had quickly adopted an intimate style of interaction that allowed, and in fact supported, expression of personal concerns, strong feelings, and open efforts to resolve conflict. However, when the school joined the Chancellor's SBM/SDM initiative in the

spring of 1990 it lost its UFT facilitators, and in doing so appeared to lose its capacity to manage discussions while maintaining productivity. This difficulty with self-management became the necessary focus of the team's IBM facilitator.

Bodilla JHS, Manhattan -- Bodilla is a school with an extensive and successful history of innovation through collaboration with community based organizations, particularly Grand Street Settlement House and Bank Street College. In addition, its principal had led it into involvement with both CSIP and Corridor, using the latter to set up three, theme-based mini-schools. As a result a number of the teaching staff had experience with responsibility for shared decision making and with the involvement of CBOs in school affairs. It thus seemed to be fertile, indeed ideal, ground for the IBM/Fund Project. However, the tasks undertaken by the project proved to be relatively minor in relation to the substantive restructuring going on in the school; in this respect the project-team existed in a kind of "bubble" peripheral to the major changes, actual and contemplated, under discussion at the school. Collaborative planning with CBOs by shared decision making teams involved in school restructuring was alive at Bodilla JHS; it simply did not take place in the forum set up by the IBM/Fund Project.

Carmine High School, Queens -- Carmine is a comprehensive high school fallen on harder times: declining standardized test scores, increased absenteeism and drop-out rates, discipline problems. There is a general feeling among the staff that something has to be done to turn the school around -- to control the kids -- to stop the class cutting and absenteeism and general lack of discipline. This basic disorganization and the need to somehow "fix" the school were the problems the SBM/SDM team was supposed to address; team members felt optimistic about the changes they could effect. A number had been through CSIP and stated that it had paved the way for further changes. However, local politics -- the insistence by African-American teachers for greater representation on the team -- entirely dominated the team's attention during the year of our observation and led to an antagonistic relationship with the staff as a whole.

Ducketts Elementary, Manhattan -- Ducketts Elementary is a Chapter 1 school located in the heart of Central Harlem. It has the look, and a little of the feel, of a fortress built to protect its children and its teachers from the surrounding bleakness, offering them the calm and order of a stable, committed staff. Involvement with shared decision making began in the fall of 1989, when Ducketts became a Corridor school. At the time, Corridor was not seen as an important initiative at the school, and those who volunteered and were given charge of it were not the "in group" teachers who would normally have been chosen, an elemental political fact that led to considerable discord later. This naive team was unclear as how to move forward, and so applied for the services of an IBM facilitator in hopes that that would help.
The facilitator meshed instantly with the team, and agreed to meet weekly with them and to provide whatever technical assistance they needed -- far exceeding the typical IBM commitment. However, their rapid progress in her hands and their efforts to keep control of the process quickly got them enmeshed in district politics, leading to the team's downfall.

Enterprise Night High School, Manhattan -- Enterprise opened in February 1989 as a second chance, alternative high school for 400 students who had failed in other schools or whose circumstances made it difficult for them to succeed. About seven teachers originated the SBM/SDM team in the fall of 1989, but since the faculty was small in number, uniformly new to the school, and self-selected, the school as a whole was a team endeavor from its inception. Most of the staff of 17 are involved with the team's work as well as other, multiple, all-but-indistinguishable committees. For these people, one meeting tends to flow into another, to the point that the focus of the SBM/SDM team was not "school restructuring" but simply the pursuit, in yet one more forum, of progress on a range of issues of concern to all and under discussion everywhere.

Fletcher Elementary, Brooklyn -- Fletcher Elementary is a school of 850 students (90% African-American, 10% Latino and white) and about 40 staff members located in a pocket of

middle class accomplishment within a generally poverty-stricken section of Brooklyn. It is a school where most of the teachers seem content and intend to stay. Said one, "We are very close with our children. This is a family here and we don't let the kids fall through the cracks. We work together to make sure each child is cared for." Part of their strength flows from successful efforts to encourage parent involvement in all aspects of school functioning, including co-chairing the SBM/SDM team. The school had recently come through a period in which the staff and the assistant principal banded together to run the school until a new principal was hired. This experience, plus earlier participation in CSIP, brought together an SBM/SDM team that found itself to be "just naturally well organized," but they joined the IBM/Fund project without a great deal of clarity as to what was being offered -- without even realizing until just hours before the deadline for submission of their application to the project, for example, that they had to connect with a CBO.

The Interactions of Context and Initiative

The IBM/Fund Project was not only a ground-breaking experiment in corporate and foundation aid to schools, it was a radical experiment. Metaphorically, it not only attempted to combine known but occasionally aversive chemicals -- public schools, community based organizations, and managerial experts from private industry -- in powerful ways, it sought to do so in a laboratory, the NYC Public Schools' SBM/SDM initiative of 1990-1991, that was being constructed as the experiment took place. Even the term "laboratory" implies more control than was the case, for literally nothing was known about the workability of the SBM/SDM teams or their capacity as change agents.

The teams were building without architects, plans, or specific delegated powers, having simply been invited to organize and make themselves useful to their schools. The community based organizations were thus asked to enter a planning process that was not focused on their interests, and be part of a "management team" that often had not yet organized itself, discovered its responsibilities, decided what it wanted to work on, or found how to proceed. The IBM managers were knowledgeable within their sphere, well supported, and adaptively oriented, but they were asked to help without being given any guidance concerning the realities of school politics, the difficulties of school innovation, or the likely problems of SBM/SDM (which indeed may not have been known then). Everything proceeded by good intentions and inchoate hopes of what might be accomplished.

As might be expected in such a situation, much took place that was unexpected, and some of what *was* expected and hoped for did not in fact come about. In fact, it would be quite possible to find one's attention occupied by what *failed* to take place. For example, of the six schools studied, only one SDM team, Fletcher Elementary's, functioned well, accomplished a number of worthwhile changes, and established a sense of momentum. A second team (at Ducketts Elementary) came together beautifully through the extraordinary efforts of an exceptionally dedicated IBM facilitator, instituted some good, new programs and productive CBO collaborations, and began to strongly influence school culture toward an ethos of collaboration and shared responsibility -- but saw its castle turn to ashes because of district/school politics. Four teams (Armstrong Elementary, Bodilla JHS, Carmine HS,and Enterprise) accomplished little in their schools, spending most of their time working out their own internal difficulties of governance, trust, and communication.

On the other hand, such a view, though accurate in its details, is nevertheless jaundiced by its implied premise that a great deal (or at least a great deal more) *ought* to have taken place. A contrary and perhaps more realistic view might be that there is little reason to expect substantive results from the early stages of *any* systemic initiative, whether or not it is as unfamiliar to city schools as SBM/SDM, and whether or not it is as complex as the school/corporate/CBO linkage. Indeed it may be argued that the capacity of social intervention *in general* to achieve its ends

quickly and cleanly is more a hope and a delusion of planners than a dependent variable of good thinking (Sarason, 1977; McLaughlin, 1987; Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; McLaughlin, 1990). We may look for patterns in what occurred, and we have a right to hope for continued learning about what to do more and better, but "social engineering" remains an oxymoron. In the social realm the best and the brightest must cut and fit along with the rest.

The Role of Context -- School reform efforts, even ones as powerfully conceived, carefully mounted, and well supported as the IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement, are not built as castles on bare ground but must enter into the complex and powerfully driven histories of the contexts they hope to reform. The process, so aptly phrased by Milbrey McLaughlin, is one of "bargaining and transformation" (1987, p. 175), not a construction process leading to predictable results barring faulty architecture.

When that planning is well done, when there are sufficient resources to support the reform effort, and most particularly when the context is supportive, then solid accomplishment can occur as it did at Fletcher Elementary. First, Fletcher itself is a successful school with high morale and a culture of experimentation and support for change, evidence of the truism that successful schools tend to become involved in innovative programs that bring them more success. Further, according to the participants involved, the Fletcher project succeeded for one main reason, the resources provided by a $10,000 Community Board grant. Their story is thus a microcosm of positive linkage between context, resources, and project initiative.

And the less successful teams? There, too context held considerable sway over both activities and outcomes. The troubles at Enterprise HS and the collapse of the Ducketts Elementary team, for example, may have been hastened by some errors in judgment made by the teams and their facilitators, but it seems that these became critical only because of the schools' highly politicized context, predating the IBM/Fund Project. At Ducketts, it was the struggle for control by the District and by teachers not on the team that brought down the team and negated its efforts; and it was a struggle for control between administration and teaching staff which so plagued Enterprise. Similarly, it was the larger context at Carmine High School -- the fact that a newly created Black Teachers Caucus chose to make SBM/SDM team governance the focus of its militant efforts to redress decades of institutionalized racism -- that consumed the team's attention to the detriment of all other matters. Further, it could be argued that contextual factors -- the loss of highly capable UFT Teacher Centers facilitators and then a principal, and the problems of dealing with the school's rapidly increasing enrollment and its transition to Chapter 1 status -- brought on the difficulties of the Armstrong Elementary team. It had achieved a highly successful level of interaction prior to 1990,[3] so their loss of functional efficiency is otherwise a puzzle. And finally, the fact that the team at Badillo was kept on the periphery of school-wide restructuring for most of the year was determined by its principal, not some attribute of the project.

Given the outlines brought forward by this point of view, should we conclude that context rules? Is the success of a project, like the pattern in a kaleidoscope, a result of nothing more than the passing alignment of random elements? Perhaps, but just as context influences kaleidoscopic patterns that may be worth remarking, so there are other causes and effects deserving of comment. These are more closely related to the deliberate efforts of the IBM/Fund Project to help the New York City schools, and to the efforts of the SDM teams to govern themselves and be of use.

The IBM Initiative -- In form, the IBM/Fund Project was in the tradition of efforts to improve schools through corporate training in practices that had proved effective in business, a tradition that had dominated educational management from the Taylorism of the early 1900s into the attempts at

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[3]For a case study of the team's work from 1988 to 1990, see Lieberman *et al,* 1991, in which the school is called Marcus Cincinnati Elementary.

efficiency through Management by Objectives of the 1950s (*cf.* Callahan, 1962). Nevertheless, though related to these established patterns, IBM's involvement was decidedly innovative in its concept and application. Most particularly, it departed from the traditional missionary spirit and didactic imperialism that has generally characterized efforts by businesses and university-based researchers to inform and change school practice.

IBM's strategic planning process came from a newer tradition, that of innovative businesses within "knowledge work" industries. In such organizations, line workers are seen as having knowledge and understanding quite different from and probably unavailable to those above them, and there is an effort to push decision making downward in the hierarchy to take advantage of this expertise. It is thus part of management's role in those industries to empower workers, particularly by providing them with the *structures* (SDM teams for example) and the *resources* needed for their involvement in decision making.

Accordingly and appropriately, adaptiveness to the expressed and developing needs of each school was a shibboleth of the IBM training. In their own orientation sessions the IBM managers were repeatedly reminded of the importance of adaptation to the particular needs of their team, of the need to be "sensitive, neutral," to "work at the pace of the school," and "to facilitate, not lead." Strategic planning was not a prescription to be rigidly applied but a potentially useful tool, *a resource* whose utility could only be discovered in practice by the different teams, whose activities would necessarily be as idiosyncratic as their schools. In sum, to the extent that enlightened policy can inform training to maximize its potential utility, that policy was followed by IBM.

92% of those responding to a request for an evaluation immediately after their training session stated that they had found the training in strategic planning to be useful or very useful. Moreover, as there is often a "bless you all" halo effect immediately following a well-run retreat, it is perhaps even more indicative that several months later, in February, 1991, 97% of those responding to an open-ended survey question about the facilitation -- "How has the action planning process practiced by your IBM facilitator affected the team's functioning?" -- stated positive or highly positive results. (The only negative comment concerning an IBM facilitator who had not been present since the retreat.)

Further, the positive comments at mid-year related directly to what had been IBM's stated hopes concerning the potential utility of their training. Respondents noted, variously, that action planning helped them focus on and clarify their goals, kept them on target, "made us function efficiently and effectively," and showed how to accomplish goals step by step.[4] Similar reactions showed up in the case studies: "Getting everyone involved is one thing, but getting them committed to specific actions is another -- strategic planning helps you to do that" (Carmine HS). "I learned right off that we didn't focus very well on issues...We didn't organize. The facilitator taught us how to focus, how to know what is happening, what to focus on, what to accomplish. Then we work it out piece by piece, you know, who does *what* by *when"* (Fletcher Elementary). A further question in June -- "In what ways was the help of your IBM facilitator most useful?" -- brought forth responses from twelve schools. Most commented about the organizing/goal-accomplishment benefits previously noted; but others, variously, wrote of their facilitators' support for team building, leadership training, team functioning, and role definition. Asked to judge *how* useful the facilitator's help was, 58% of this same group ranked it as "very much." (The two schools who said they had received "very little" help were complaining about the inadequate presence of their facilitators, not about their lack of utility when present.)

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[4] Observations did not always support the teams' self-evaluations: two of the documented teams reported their use of IBM's training while showing none of its effects on the occasions in which they were observed, but as we may compliment our doctor's advice without always following it, so perhaps these teams should be allowed the same privilege.

However, the irregular, or apparently insufficient, presence of the IBM facilitators troubled more than the two schools mentioned above. The team at Armstrong Elementary repeatedly slid away from the discussion-management practices taught them by their facilitator and practiced in his presence; the team at Enterprise lost most of its momentum when their facilitator was called away on business during the middle part of the year; and Fletcher Elementary managed its good works without seeing their facilitator between November and April. ("I found her to be a good person to work with, *when* we could work with her. She just couldn't make many of the meetings...I would have liked a much stronger connection with IBM.")

To some extent this was an unavoidable problem of design: if one chooses to rely on corporate volunteers, then one must expect that work demands will necessarily limit their attendance, and perhaps even keep some away for months at a time. Indeed the design *specified* that the managers would be available to the schools for only 10 days throughout the year. However, we can also note the stipulation in the project's design that no IBM manager could be assigned to a school that already had the services of a Board-based facilitator. With the clarity of hindsight we can say that the complaints and difficulties listed above would not have occurred if that "segregation stipulation" were not in place. The SDM teams at the project schools might have been better served if they had been given the services of an IBM manager to train them in strategic planning *as well as* a board-designated facilitator to guide their weekly work and help their process, but it was not until well into 1990-1991 and after long argument with representatives of the Fund that the way was cleared for this possibility by Askia Davis, the Chancellor's newly appointed deputy in charge of SBM/SDM.

A related problem was the lack of contextual knowledge of the IBM managers. Trained and practiced in a different milieu, they had a structural, rational approach to strategic planning: it was a means to help management teams make more effective connections between their goals, their objectives, and their actions (*viz* IBM's earlier work with the Chancellor and his deputies). It does not appear that anyone oriented the IBM managers to the fact that these "management teams" had no authority to implement their decisions, or point out the sometimes quite different organization structure and complex political relationships of public education at the district and school level. Lacking either a mandate from below or specific delegated authority from above, these teams could not simply direct, change in their schools; they needed help with the *leadership* , not the management, of public school change.

Under the circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that unexpected political tangles were the bane of several teams' work, and the death of one. In the worst case, Ducketts Elementary, the facilitator, possibly overly committed to the desire to help her team and insensitive to or unknowing about school/district politics, participated in the team's efforts to keep their initiative out of the hands and away from the influence of the school's traditional teacher-leaders. The resultant explosion brought about the facilitator's resignation, put the team out of office, installed the very leaders they had been attempting to block, and effectively killed the collaborative structure they had been nurturing. Surely all that was not deliberately put at risk, and instead must have come as a great surprise. Further, at Carmine HS the facilitator inappropriately argued for *management* solutions to the team's *political* problems. Politics (a demand for a greater voice for African-American teachers) had invaded the team's deliberations and demanded their attention, clogging their capacity to make decisions and exasperating the rest of the school. Despite their distaste for the task, despite their wish to move on to more educationally-oriented concerns, the team nevertheless realized that, somehow, a resolution had to be found which satisfied all factions. The facilitator did not see it that way, and argued that the team had to stop waffling, *decide* what to do in the school, and then *do* it: "You need to close the doors and not leave the room until you come up with something you can implement." They responded, "That may work in business, but not in schools. Unless the staff buys into what we are planning it's a waste of time."

Nevertheless, aside from difficulties related to the insufficient frequency of the managers' presence and their lack of preparation for school politics, IBM's facilitation and training worked well. The project was intelligently mounted, the volunteering managers carried their expertise with sensitivity and applied it adaptively, and the teams were nearly uniform in their praise for IBM and their statements of benefit from the training.

The CBO/School Initiative -- The part of the IBM/Fund Project that was focused on collaboration between schools and community based organizations met with far less success. Arguably, the CBO piece was far more complicated in that it did not allow for a direct transfer of skills but instead was founded on an undefined progress toward "improvement in collaboration" between organizations with little time for or perhaps even inclination toward that improvement. Nevertheless, there were also problems with the way the CBO initiative was mounted and implemented, and the effect was to diminish outcomes.

First, the funders' concerns were linked to the actions of newly formed school-based management teams with widely varying, indeed confusing agendas beyond CBO collaboration; and no effort was made by the IBM/Fund Project to link together the various CBOs involved. Instead, the volunteering IBM managers were asked to visit at least one of the CBOs involved with their schools before going on the retreat (not all did so). Certainly this represents a lessening of structured support for CBO voices compared to the focused task groups and CBO-only retreat the Fund had used to pilot the school/CBO collaboration effort. Arguably, the IBM managers were thus less attuned to CBO concerns.

Moreover, although the piloted schools had been individually solicited and were accepted to the project after an interview that established their investment in improving school-CBO relations, with the IBM/Fund Project this individual solicitation was abandoned in favor of a letter of commitment signed by each school and one of its CBOs. This understandable substitution of paper requirements for personal contact in the widened scope of 160 SBM/SDM and Corridor schools nevertheless unfortunately opened the door for "declarations of commitment" that existed only on paper. The effect, it turned out later, was that some schools expressed an interest in collaboration with outside partners (CBOs) that was not perhaps entirely sincere, but was rather stated as a ticket of admission to the perceived IBM sweepstakes. ("They were up with us at the Palisades retreat, but really, a lot of what they do is tangential to us -- to what the team does.") The problem was compounded by some of the IBM facilitators (those at Armstrong Elementary, Bodilla JHS, and Carmine HS that we know of), who seemed to ignore the improvement of CBO collaboration. They did not meet the CBO representatives until they showed up at the retreat, or, when interviews were arranged, kept the focus on the needs of the SDM team. As the Director of the primary CBO involved with Bodilla JHS put it, "In its approach IBM did not promote collaboration; they met with the school and decided on the focus for the retreat and *then* they met with us. As a result there was a lack of focus concerning the purpose of the retreat, a lack of clarity and explanation."

Third, not surprisingly given the generic school/CBO conflicts noted by the funder and the broad but inchoate responsibilities of the SDM teams, a number of schools (four out of the six documented) and their CBOs found that their concerns were in fact quite disparate. Understandably, CBO attendance at team meetings tended to die off after the retreat: "I can't really go to the meetings unless there is funding there. My schedule is so hectic as it is I can't really afford to volunteer very much of my time," said one CBO representative.

In consequence of all this, project efforts to improve CBO/school collaboration led to very mixed results. At three of the schools we documented -- Ducketts Elementary, Bodilla JHS, and Fletcher Elementary -- extended work between the school personnel, the parents, and the CBOs led to a rich variety of new programs, some for parents, some for children, some involving staff development, all resulting from entirely new collaborations. On the other hand, at Armstrong

Elementary, Carmine HS, and Enterprise no improvement in collaboration took place. Overall, a lack of positive results was indicated as well in approximately half of the schools supplying survey responses. Asked, "How has the quantity of collaboration with the school's community-based organizations been affected by the planning and activities of the SDM Team this year?" some of the survey responses were: "Not at all;" "We have not had many opportunities to involve community based organizations;" "Not one bit. There hasn't been any!" and "Their activities appear to be continuing as before, without being affected by SBM." The best that can be said is that those teams that *entered* with a strong commitment to greater involvement with CBOs were able to make good use of the opportunities created by the project; and that in their hands these opportunities increased services to children. This is no bad result, mind you, but it is far short of the project's original goal, which specified a necessary improvement in the *quality* of CBO/school collaboration, a lessening of confusion and conflict.

It seems that we have here a perfect example of the half full (half empty) glass. Those schools that sought and welcomed increased collaboration with CBOs seem to have been able to use the project to good effect; but half of the school/CBO collaborations studied show little change as a result of participation in the project and none spoke or showed evidence of improved quality of collaboration. While it should be remembered that some teams accomplished little beyond self-management (and sometimes not always that) in *any* area, these very difficulties do reflect at least one of the problems of hitching the goal of increased and improved CBO involvement to an engine whose pulling power was not yet established. The Fund for New York City Public Education attempted a synergistic combination of means toward multiple project ends and achieved significant savings thereby, but the cost appears to have been a significant loss of CBO-focus, and consequent indeterminate results.

Discussion

As noted previously, attempts to assess the effects of SBM/SDM have tended to focus, understandably, on problems of implementation and on the limited effects of school restructuring on classroom practice. In an earlier paper (1992) I attempted to take the argument somewhat further, evaluating the effects of SBM/SDM practice in New York City within *and despite* the existing limitations, despite the actualities of limited implementation. In line with Milbrey McLaughlin's suggestion that in the beginning of a project we look for "multiple, intermediate measures that can gauge the vitality of the process" (1987, p. 176), that paper put forth the thesis, based on empirical evidence, that the most useful criterion of the effectiveness of an SBM/SDM team in its first year or two is its vitality and momentum, and that these were brought forth chiefly by a team's *practice of leadership,* particularly its self-maintenance, allowance for conflict, acceptance of responsibility for organizational culture, and the initiation of small steps toward big visions,[5] and, perhaps most important, an emphasis on communication with the rest of the staff. The key finding was that if one measured "success" as high morale on the team, a more-or-less supportive staff, and a growing sense of momentum, then *none* of the least successful teams we studied and *all* of the most successful followed the named practices. Kanter (1983) suggests that organizations that do not provide their decision making bodies with "power tools" for change (time, expertise, authority) do not see significant results forthcoming. She may eventually be proved right concerning the New York City schools, whose SDM teams were provided with little

[5]The virtues, if not the necessity of "small wins" was well argued by Karl Weick (1984); I am indebted to Matt Miles for pointing out the connection.

or no time and no authority,[6] but we found considerable evidence of their power to gather human resources for change even when other resources were lacking.

Concerning our somewhat less stringent criteria for success, whereby the "significant results" of the first year or two were considered to be morale and momentum, we found that neither time nor authority were absolutely necessary, though their lack was often begrudged: "I've spent hours studying the SBM literature and I am still confused as to what powers we actually have as a team," said the chairman at Carmine. What did seem necessary was expertise, particularly about decision making and discussion management, an expertise that could reside in an active organizational leader, in the team as a whole, or in a facilitator. A team that advertised its naivete and confusion, like Ducketts, could nevertheless make great strides in the hands of an ever present, knowledgeable, and active facilitator from IBM; and a team like Fletcher's, "just naturally well organized" and possessed of strong and knowledgeable co-chairs -- but without any facilitation at all to speak of -- could likewise accomplish a great deal. The Armstrong team, on the other hand, cried out for strong leadership and benefited every time their facilitator was present, but lagged during his necessarily frequent absences. As he put it in June, "The discussions did get a little better for a while but it has slipped back and is probably headed in the wrong direction." The Enterprise team had even greater needs, and even less access to their facilitator; at that school the IBM/Fund Project more or less was abandoned for most of the winter. And finally, the Carmine team, with both good leadership and good facilitation, felt that it had managed well despite great difficulties, but found that even good management was not sufficient to bring about necessary outcomes.

The Carmine experience is the clearest example of a dynamic that can be appreciated right across the study: *teams focus school issues.* Through the mechanism of the shared decision making teams, whatever issues are afloat in a school come clear. When those issues are positive ones, the desire to bring parents in to the educational process (Fletcher), the drive to empower the staff (Ducketts), the world says, "Oh what a good team!" When those issues are less to our liking, the turf-protection strategy at Ducketts, the wrangling with authority at Enterprise, the struggles over governance at Carmine, then the world says, "Oh, what's the *matter* with that team? They're not concentrating on improving conditions for children!" But in neither case are the teams the source of the issues which consume their time; rather, they are responding to and bringing to a head the issues that are afloat in their schools. Although we may not always approve of the results, it is important to recognize that, while the horse may be in front of the cart, it is not in authority over the cart and it does not decide where the cart will go.

Finally, the role of politics both large and small is worth noting. "Small" politics -- conflicts over representation, voice, and turf -- has already been remarked in the deliberations of three of the teams, and as leading to the disbanding of a fourth. The best perspective on this unfortunate dominance is that of the previous paragraph: in no case did SDM *bring* politics into an otherwise dispassionate and high minded dialogue. Rather, the teams were creatures of the political environment of their schools. Staffed by popular vote and representative democracy, possessed of no decision making authority but only the potential for leadership, they behaved like the representative decision making bodies they were, attempting to do what they could with the materials they had been provided, doing whatever appeared to be necessary.

"Large" politics -- the politics of educational policy as practiced by the Board of Education, foundations, and corporate entities -- played a somewhat predictable role. Though possessed of the

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[6]As the National Association of State Boards of Education puts it: "it is clear that unless sufficient time is provided for working out these new ways of making decisions, site-based management is nothing but rhetoric. And because time is money, school districts will have to allocate additional resources for this process to ensure that decentralized decision making becomes a reality" (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1990, p. 10).

power to set things in motion and provide resources it nevertheless displayed the tendency to "look outward" toward its constituencies instead of inward toward the developing needs of the project (Elmore, 1988), with the unfortunate result that "the mere appearance of innovation [was] sometimes sufficient for achieving political success" (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 746). Thus the Chancellor's school based *management* was really more a matter of, at best, school based *leadership* by teams without the mandates necessary for management. Thus the IBM volunteers took the place of *facilitators* to the schools even though they were not equipped by circumstance, training, or support[7] to do so. Thus the Fund did not seek to fully involve the CBOs in the project, with the result that little improvement in the quality of school/CBO collaboration in any school resulted, while quantity of collaboration increased in only half of the schools involved.

The IBM/Fund Project for School Improvement took major steps toward providing the structures and resources necessary for the accomplishment of its goals. However, these resources were sufficient only in the case of one school, Fletcher, itself exceptionally rich in resources. The key lacks were an occasional reliance on symbol over substance in each of the project's three key areas (teams, IBM volunteers, CBOs), and a failure to allow for ongoing adaptation by the project to circumstances in the schools as understanding of those circumstances developed and changed. Individual IBM managers were able to adapt their practice to the needs they perceived, and teams were responsive to their situations, but the Board, the Fund, and IBM -- the only potential source of additional resources and alternative practices -- did not show evidence of "bargaining and transformation."

[7]IBM management brought their volunteers together for a celebratory dinner at mid-year but resisted the idea of using that time or any other to help them decide how to do it better: reflection on practice was not an imperative in this initiative. In contrast, all the Board facilitators met monthly, designed and attended further orientations for themselves and others, and participated in a professional support structure of ongoing training and supervision at their training bases.

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